Seroor, India; July 16th 1844

To the Soc. of Inquiry,
Princeton Theol. Seminary.
Dear Brethren,

Your very acceptable letter of Feb. 2nd came to hand about two months since. I am glad to know that there is still in your important institution a band of brethren who care for a perishing world and are anxious to know their duty in regard to the Savior's last command. The amount of information which your extended correspondence ~~will~~ must bring you, will help you determine this point. Be assured that I most willingly do what I can to throw light on your path.

In the first place let me say a few words on the Missionary work in general. Very few candidates for it, even after the most careful inquiries made under the most favorable circumstances, obtain correct views of the service in which they are to engage. Nothing but actual experience can furnish them with those views. Let none then be disappointed if on entering the field they shall find things different in many respects from what they anticipated. Some, it is to be feared, find this disappointment so great that it is with difficulty they can reconcile themselves to their unexpected circumstances. Be prepared, then, to take things as you find them, to enter upon the work as your Master prepares it for you. – Another important point to which I would direct your attention is that the missionary should be thoroughly "rooted & grounded" in the experimental as well as doctrinal knowledge of Divine truth. Many get the idea that the missionary work is very favorable to progress in holiness. But this is a great mistake especially as it relates to the early part of a missionary's life. There are many adverse circumstances with which he must contend, that will require all his humility, & patience, & faith and every other grace which constitutes a well-balanced, established Christian character. This remark I think will apply to all missions, but especially to those we call "hard fields." Let those then who think of going to the heathen put on the whole armor of God, and get accustomed to it beforehand. Do not misunderstand me. I do not say that a missionary to the heathen must necessarily be a sufferer in spiritual things. Far from this — if he comes out a living established Christian, one who has within him "a well of water springing up into everlasting life", he will live & grow in grace, notwithstanding the adverse circumstances to which I have referred. But if he enters this work with unsettled principles & unestablished Christian character, he hazards much. The missionary is often shut out from all except the more private means of grace, & is obliged to live as it were upon his own resources. Then if he has not a living faith which unites the soul to Christ, he must languish. This subject demands your serious consideration. But I must pass to another topic.

The missionary work as you are aware, is assuming by the blessing of God, a more & more interesting aspect. Even in the past five years since I have been permitted to labor in the vineyard, a great change has taken place. In some fields, such as Syria & the Mountain Nestorians, it has been a period of adversity & discouragement. But in other parts of the vineyard "what hath God wrought?" Look at the Sand. Islands with their thousands of converts — at the Armenians of Turkey, seeking for the "good old paths," — at China with her teeming millions brought within the reach of the blessed Gospel — and at India even, where the strong holds of Satan are beginning to give way & the light of salvation is beginning to beam on its gross darkness. These distinct & distant revolutions in the moral world going on simultaneously, show us that there is a mighty unseen agency at work — an agency which neither the walls of China nor the gates of hell can resist. While such a power is overturning the nations & preparing them for the reign of the King of kings, how loud the call for us to seize the standard of the cross, & plant it on the enemy's walls. And who of you, dear brethren, will aspire to the honor the blessedness of this work? Are not your hearts fired with a desire to enter upon a work so noble in its nature, so glorious & certain in its results?

But I must give you a more particular account of this field. India you know is considered, & justly so, a hard field — it is one of Satan's strong holds. The system of caste which is the great obstacle to the spread of the Gospel seems to be his master-piece. It is impossible to describe the nature & extent of this obstacle — it meets us in every shape & on every hand. Still I am happy to say that this strong hold is beginning to yield.

Every convert to Christianity weakens it, & not only so, but makes an addition to the battering force. How long this fabric shall be permitted to stand is known only to God. But this is certain, when it does fall it will be with a mighty crash. The whole Brahminical system rests upon it. The means to be used in bringing about so important an end, are those already employed, but to a very limited extent. Superstition is the offspring of darkness & darkness can be expelled only by the diffusion of light. Light, gospel light, attended by the grace of God, is the universal panacea for all the moral ills of this people. But how shall light be diffused? Will the few tapers already lighted here & there suffice? Will the blaze of the gospel shining on the other side of the globe, dispel the darkness that broods here? No, brethren, India will not be redeemed but in obedience to the Savior's last command. And to whom is that command addressed more directly than to yourselves?

Whatever be the claims of other parts of the world, this field is deserving of the attention of the churches. (1) A great harvest is to be gathered here; (2) It is an important harvest. (3) The time has come to gather it. (4) There are none comparatively to thrust in the sickle. Come, then, to our relief- share with us in our labors & our rewards- bind up the precious sheaves, & bear them away to the garner of the Lord. Be assured from the mouth of the Lord that you shall not labor in vain. Even in our weakness & discouragements, we are not denied the joys of harvest. Five years since, the native church of this mission numbered but about a dozen members. At the beginning of this year there were 48 members in good standing, & there were 27 children on whom the seal of the covenant had been placed. Such results are not to be despised, especially when the field from which these fruits have been gathered promises a still richer harvest. Our hearts are encouraged in view of what God is doing for this people, but it is painful to see how little sympathy the churches & - must I say it? - our brethren of the Theo. Seminaries have for this work. May this stain upon the followers of the Lamb be immediately effaced. With the best Christian regards to each & all of your number,

I am, Dear brethren,

Yours very truly

O. French

P.S. The particular state of our mission you will learn from the publications of the Board with which I am connected. We are a little band, & I fear we shall soon be smaller. We greatly need a reinforcement, but our prospects in this respect are dark. The Lord send us help in this our time — our waiting eyes are to him. I shall always be happy to hear from you. O.F.

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To the Secretary of the
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